

October 8, 2009



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Dear Friend,

While health care reform continues to occupy center stage in Congress, another health concern has worked its way to the national forefront because of its deadly potential: flu season. This year there are new strains and complexities that we must prepare for at every level of government.

In addition to the 36,000 who perish annually to the **seasonal flu** (4,000 in California), another strain of the flu called **novel H1N1 influenza A** (earlier called swine flu) has been threatening our country since the spring. To date hundreds have died from **novel H1N1** – and not the typical demographic of older Americans. Toddlers, pregnant women and youth have been hit particularly hard, and this raises the concerns of public health officials.

Though the death toll for **novel H1N1** might seem relatively small compared to that of the **seasonal flu**, there is concern that the already pandemic levels of infection could tragically spike as the traditional flu season (October 4 through May 2010) plays out. Or, that the novel H1N1 strain itself could change and go in a new deadly direction.

Why this level of alarm? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta reported again this week that visits to doctors for influenza-like-illness are increasing nationally. Visits to doctors for influenza illness are higher than what is expected during this time of year and have increased for seven consecutive weeks now. This is unusual.

For this reason, I have added [information about the flu](#) on my website, which we will update whenever public health officials issue new information and directives.

Included in this first version of the "Fighting the Flu" link is information about seasonal flu, novel H1N1, the latest information about vaccines, and prevention tips if you want to avoid the flu, or avoid passing it on to someone else. For instance, the simple act of frequent hand washing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers and covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing are recommended. This week's installment will link to the CDC, the California

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week's installment will link to the CDC, the California Department of Health and a link which, after inserting your zip code, will help you locate a seasonal flu vaccine provider.

Speaking of vaccines, you can get them now for the seasonal flu at your doctor, health clinic or any number of drugstores and grocery stores, including Walgreens, Rite Aid, Safeway and some Raleys. The cost is \$25. If you can't afford it, you may qualify for a free seasonal flu shot.

The vaccine for novel H1N1 is a different story. First of all, a seasonal flu vaccine **will not protect you from novel H1N1**. So, if your doctor thinks you'll need both, plan on getting both. The first dosages of H1N1 vaccine are being distributed now to the 90,000 providers from coast to coast. Health professionals are getting the estimated 4.5 million doses headed for California and concentrating on those at highest risk: health professionals, youth and pregnant women. The novel H1N1 vaccine trials suggest one dose of the vaccine should offer protection against the new virus in children ages 10 to 17 and most adults, while younger children will likely need two doses, according to officials. For more information, contact your pediatrician or family practice physician.

I will pass updates along to you as I get them. But in the meantime, keep your ears open – and those hands washed.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Lungren
Member of Congress

Will you be getting a novel H1N1 vaccination when available?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Any other comments?

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